



**TESTIMONY OF BENNY TSO
CHAIRMAN OF THE LAS VEGAS PAIUTE TRIBE
BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
JUNE 9, 2026**

**Hearing on H.R. 6917 Taking Certain Federally Owned Lands into Trust for the
Benefit of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe**

Good morning, Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Benny Tso, and I am Chairman of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, located in the Las Vegas Valley of Southern Nevada. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present testimony on behalf of our Tribe.

I am here in support of H.R. 6917, a bill that would transfer and place into trust lands currently under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management and adjacent to our Snow Mountain Reservation.

I would first like to thank Congresswoman Dina Titus for introducing this legislation. She has been a longtime friend and supporter of the Tribe, and we appreciate her hard work on our behalf over many years. The same with her colleague, Congressman Mark Amodei, a co-sponsor of this legislation and a member of the Natural Resources Committee. Finally, I extend our appreciation to our other Nevada representatives – Congresswoman Susie Lee,

also a member of the full committee, and Congressman Steven Horsford. Both support us in this effort.

This legislation represents more than a decade of work by the Tribe to have these approximately 3,200 acres of our ancestral lands added to our Snow Mountain Reservation. The Snow Mountain Reservation was created by Congress in 1983 to provide for greater economic growth for our Tribe – beyond the 10 acres in downtown Las Vegas originally ceded to us in 1911 by landowner Helen J. Stewart to be a – and I’m quoting here – “colony” for the remnants of our people.

Our ancestors were the Tudinu, or “Desert People”. Our traditional homelands covered southeastern Nevada, southern California, and Utah. Our ancestors relied on springs, mountains, and seasonal camps to support a way of life adapted to the desert.

Sadly, the arrival of newcomers to the Las Vegas Valley led to their decline. By the early 1800s, trappers, traders, and then permanent settlers began moving into the Valley, disrupting Paiute movement and access to water-rich lands. After the United States took control of the region in 1848, and settlement expanded, the Las Vegas Paiutes were pushed off most of their traditional homeland. The lands we are now seeking represent a minor portion of what once was.

Still, our Tribe has endured and created self-sufficiency with our economic development efforts. At Snow Mountain, the Tribe has built three world-class golf courses which are enjoyed by the residents of Las Vegas, as well as numerous visitors to our city. It also employs numerous non-tribal members of the community. The lands we are seeking to add are directly adjacent to our Snow Mountain Reservation and although they will clearly help our Tribe grow, these lands are much more than just ordinary to us.

The lands outlined in this legislation were part of the lands traversed by our ancestors from Mount Charleston – where they spent the hot summers – to the valley floor during the winter months. This route extended to the Sheep Mountains, which are visible from our Snow Mountain Reservation and are sacred to the culture of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe. Our people lived, died and worshipped on these lands.

We currently maintain cooperative management agreements with BLM for the lands contained in the legislation to protect them for future generations of our Tribe. Taking them into trust in the Tribe's behalf is the culmination of our efforts to preserve them.

It is important to point out that the transfer of these lands will benefit the entire region. Throughout the decade during which we have sought this transfer, the Tribe has worked with other major stakeholders in Southern Nevada. For example, the lands to be taken into trust contain an energy transmission corridor that will provide needed electricity to our state. The Tribe has entered into agreements with the energy provider to ensure that the project will immediately be granted a right-of-way consistent with the line currently in place on the Snow Mountain Reservation. This agreement is referenced in the legislation.

We are also working with the United States Air Force to develop support industries on our reservation to serve the logistical needs of Creech Air Force base to the north of us. The Tribe has gladly supported the Air Force in Nevada, including working together on military land usage near our reservation and protecting tribal cultural assets on lands within Air Force jurisdiction.

As the Las Vegas Valley continues to grow and as new homes fill the valley, the Snow Mountain Reservation represents a living reflection of its history, how things once were, how the valley once looked and who once lived there.

I respectfully urge the committee's support for H.R. 6917, not only for the Las Vegas Paiute people but for future generations of all Southern Nevadans. Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.